
Courtly Love

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FROM THE stablehands to the courtiers, all the realm was in dismay. Even the leaves on the trees seemed dimmed to the shades of more ordinary lands as the news spread: the king loved his young bride as none but the pure of heart can do, but the queen had been caught eyeing another man. Her lady's maid swore that she saw the queen brush her hand across this knight's cheek, the queen's touch as gentle as the morning fog that rolled in from the sea. The lady's maid swore moreover that the look that burned in the queen's eye was not of a kind to be quieted by thoughts of propriety.

And this knight, who was he? A foreigner who fought well enough, spoke fair enough, risked his life readily enough for the king; but still a foreigner and not to be trusted.

The king's steward tugged mournfully at his beard as he said to his wife, 'And the king loves Lancelot as if he were a brother, more than a brother. It grieves me to think what strife this will cause, maybe even unto war.'

* * * *

In the circular room in the highest turret of the castle, the king leaned over to Lancelot. Gently as mist, he ran one finger across the clean line of Lancelot's chin. 'Dost know what thou art to me, dearer than any brother?'

Lancelot nodded, and the last rays of the setting sun flared through the narrow window till his hair shone like fire. 'Aye, my king.'

Guinevere stirred sleepily from her place between them in the bed. 'Enough speech.'

With her lips she silenced first the king, then Lancelot. Softly she sighed as the two men bent to embrace her, the three of them entwined in perfect union.

The End

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